

# Chapter I: Overview of this Plan and its Development

## 1 Introduction

This Wildland-Urban Interface Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan for Owyhee County, Idaho, is the result of analyses, professional cooperation and collaboration, assessments of wildfire risks and other factors considered with the intent to reduce the potential for wildfires to threaten people, structures, infrastructure, and unique ecosystems in Owyhee County, Idaho. The planning team responsible for implementing this project was led by the Owyhee County Commissioners. Agencies and organizations that participated in the planning process included:

- USDI Bureau of Land Management
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Southwest Idaho Resource Conservation and Development Council
- Shoshone-Paiute Tribes
- Homedale Rural Fire Department
- Marsing Rural Fire Department
- Murphy-Reynolds-Wilson Rural Fire Department
- Grand View Rural Fire Department
- Bruneau Rural Fire Department
- Mountain Home Air Force Base Fire Department
- Owyhee County Assessors Office
- Owyhee County Natural Resource Committee
- Owyhee County Sheriffs Office
- Northwest Management, Inc.

The Owyhee County Commissioners selected Northwest Management, Inc., to provide the service of leading the assessment and writing the **Owyhee County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan**. Northwest Management, Inc., is a professional natural resources consulting firm located in Moscow, Idaho. Established in 1984 NMI provides natural resource management services across the USA. The Project Manager from Northwest Management, Inc. was Dr. William E. Schlosser, a professional forester and regional planner.

### 1.1 Goals and Guiding Principles

#### 1.1.1 Federal Emergency Management Agency Philosophy

Effective November 1, 2004, a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is required for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM) eligibility. The HMGP and PDM program provides funding, through state emergency management agencies, to support local mitigation planning and projects to reduce potential disaster damages.

The new local hazard mitigation plan requirements for HMGP and PDM eligibility are based on the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, which amended the Stafford Disaster Relief Act to promote and integrated, cost effective approach to mitigation. Local hazard mitigation plans must meet the minimum requirements of the Stafford Act-Section 322, as outlined in the criteria contained in 44 CFR Part 201. The plan criteria cover the planning process, risk assessment, mitigation strategy, plan maintenance, and adoption requirements.

FEMA will only review a local hazard mitigation plan submitted through the appropriate State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO). Draft versions of local hazard mitigation plans will not be reviewed by FEMA. FEMA will review the final version of a plan prior to local adoption to determine if the plan meets the criteria, but FEMA will be unable to approve it prior to adoption. In Idaho the SHMO is:

Idaho Department of Homeland Security  
4040 Guard Street, Bldg 600  
Boise, ID 83705  
Jonathan Perry, 208-334-2336 Ext. 271

A FEMA designed plan will be evaluated on its adherence to a variety of criteria.

- Adoption by the Local Governing Body
- Multi-jurisdictional Plan Adoption
- Multi-jurisdictional Planning Participation
- Documentation of Planning Process
- Identifying Hazards
- Profiling Hazard Events
- Assessing Vulnerability: Identifying Assets
- Assessing Vulnerability: Estimating Potential Losses
- Assessing Vulnerability: Analyzing Development Trends
- Multi-Jurisdictional Risk Assessment
- Local Hazard Mitigation Goals
- Identification and Analysis of Mitigation Measures
- Implementation of Mitigation Measures
- Multi-Jurisdictional Mitigation Strategy
- Monitoring, Evaluating, and Updating the Plan
- Implementation Through Existing Programs
- Continued Public Involvement

### **1.1.2 Additional State and Federal Guidelines Adopted**

The Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan component of this All Hazards Mitigation Plan will include compatibility with FEMA requirements while also adhering to the guidelines proposed in the National Fire Plan, the Idaho Statewide Implementation Plan, and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (2004). This Wildland-Urban Interface Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan has been prepared in compliance with:

- The National Fire Plan; A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan—May 2002.
- The Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan—July 2002.
- Healthy Forests Restoration Act (2004)

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Region 10 guidelines for a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan as defined in 44 CFR parts 201 and 206, and as related to a fire mitigation plan chapter of a Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan.

***“When implemented, the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy will contribute to reducing the risks of wildfire to communities and the environment by building collaboration at all levels of government.”***  
**- The NFP 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy August 2001**

The objective of combining these four complimentary guidelines is to facilitate an integrated wildland fire risk assessment, identify pre-hazard mitigation activities, and prioritize activities and efforts to achieve the protection of people, structures, the environment, and significant infrastructure in Owyhee County while facilitating new opportunities for pre-disaster mitigation funding and cooperation.

### **1.1.2.1 National Fire Plan**

The goals of this Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan include:

1. Improve Fire Prevention and Suppression
2. Reduce Hazardous Fuels
3. Restore Fire-Adapted Ecosystems
4. Promote Community Assistance

Its three guiding principles are:

1. Priority setting that emphasizes the protection of communities and other high-priority watersheds at-risk.
2. Collaboration among governments and broadly representative stakeholders.
3. Accountability through performance measures and monitoring for results.

This Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan fulfills the National Fire Plan's 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and the Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan. The projects and activities recommended under this plan are in addition to other Federal, state, and private/corporate forest and rangeland management activities. The implementation plan does not alter, diminish, or expand the existing jurisdiction, statutory and regulatory responsibilities and authorities or budget processes of participating Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies.

By endorsing this implementation plan, all signed parties agree that reducing the threat of wildland fire to people, communities, and ecosystems will require:

- Firefighter and public safety continuing as the highest priority.
- A sustained, long-term and cost-effective investment of resources by all public and private parties, recognizing overall budget parameters affecting Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments.
- A unified effort to implement the collaborative framework called for in the Strategy in a manner that ensures timely decisions at each level.
- Accountability for measuring and monitoring performance and outcomes, and a commitment to factoring findings into future decision making activities.

- The achievement of national goals through action at the local level with particular attention on the unique needs of cross-boundary efforts and the importance of funding on-the-ground activities.
- Communities and individuals in the wildland-urban interface to initiate personal stewardship and volunteer actions that will reduce wildland fire risks.
- Management activities, both in the wildland-urban interface and in at-risk areas across the broader landscape.
- Active forestland and rangeland management, including thinning that produces commercial or pre-commercial products, biomass removal and utilization, prescribed fire and other fuels reduction tools to simultaneously meet long-term ecological, economic, and community objectives.

The National Fire Plan identifies a three-tiered organization structure including 1) the local level, 2) state/regional and tribal level, and 3) the national level. This plan adheres to the collaboration and outcomes consistent with a local level plan. Local level collaboration involves participants with direct responsibility for management decisions affecting public and/or private land and resources, fire protection responsibilities, or good working knowledge and interest in local resources. Participants in this planning process include Tribal representatives, local representatives from Federal and State agencies, local governments, landowners and other stakeholders, and community-based groups with a demonstrated commitment to achieving the strategy's four goals. Existing resource advisory committees, watershed councils, or other collaborative entities may serve to achieve coordination at this level. Local involvement, expected to be broadly representative, is a primary source of planning, project prioritization, and resource allocation and coordination at the local level. The role of the private citizen is not to be underestimated, as their input and contribution to all phases of risk assessments, mitigation activities, and project implementation is greatly facilitated by their involvement.

#### **1.1.2.2 Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy**

The Strategy adopted by the State of Idaho is to provide a framework for an organized and coordinated approach to the implementation of the National Fire Plan, specifically the national "10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan".

Emphasis is on a collaborative approach at the following levels:

- County
- State

Within the State of Idaho, the counties, with the assistance of state and federal agencies and local expert advice, will develop a risk assessment and mitigation plan to identify local vulnerabilities to wildland fire. A statewide group will provide oversight and prioritization as needed on a statewide scale.

This strategy is not intended to circumvent any work done to date and individual counties should not delay implementing any National Fire Plan projects to develop this county plan. Rather, Counties are encouraged to identify priority needs quickly and begin whatever actions necessary to mitigate those vulnerabilities.

It is recognized that implementation activities such as; hazardous fuel treatment, equipment purchases, training, home owner education, community wildland fire mitigation planning, and other activities, will be occurring concurrently with this county wide planning effort.

#### **1.1.2.2.1 County Wildland Fire Interagency Group**

Each county within the state has been requested to write a Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan. These plans should contain at least the following five elements:

- 1) Documentation of the process used to develop the mitigation plan. How the plan was developed, who was involved and how the public was involved.
- 2) A risk assessment to identify vulnerabilities to wildfire in the wildland-urban interface (WUI).
- 3) A prioritized mitigation strategy that addresses each of the risks. Examples of these strategies could be: training for fire departments, public education, hazardous fuel treatments, equipment, communications, additional planning, new facilities, infrastructure improvements, code and/or ordinance revision, volunteer efforts, evacuation plans, etc.
- 4) A process for maintenance of the plan which will include monitoring and evaluation of mitigation activities
- 5) Documentation that the plan has been formally adopted by the involved agencies. Basically a signature page of all involved officials.

This five-element plan is an abbreviated version of the FEMA mitigation plan and will begin to meet the requirements for that plan. To develop these plans each county should bring together a selection, as appropriate for the specific county, of representatives from the below listed groups to make up the County Wildland Fire Interagency Group. It is important that this group has representation from agencies with wildland fire suppression responsibilities:

- County Commissioners (Lead)
- Local Fire Chiefs
- Idaho Department of Lands representative
- USDA Forest Service representative
- USDI Bureau of Land Management representative
- US Fish and Wildlife representative
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Local Tribal leaders
- Bureau of Homeland Security
- LEPC Chairperson
- Resource Conservation and Development representative
- State Fish and Game representative
- Interested citizens and community leaders as appropriate
- Other officials as appropriate

Role of Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D): If requested by the County Commissioners, the local RC&D's may be available to assist the county commissioners in evaluating each county within their council area to determine if there is a wildland fire mitigation plan in place, or if a plan is currently in the development phase. If no plan is in place, the RC&D's, if requested, could be available to assist the commissioners with the formation of the

County Wildland Fire Interagency Group and/or to facilitate the development of wildland fire mitigation plan.

If a plan has been previously completed, the commissioners will determine if the recommended five elements have been addressed. The counties will provide a copy of the completed mitigation plan to the Idaho Department of Lands National Fire Plan Coordinator, which will include a contact list of individuals that developed the plan.

### **1.1.2.3 National Association of State Foresters**

#### **1.1.2.3.1 Identifying and Prioritizing Communities at Risk**

This plan is written with the intent to provide the information necessary for decision makers (elected officials) to make informed decisions in order to prioritize projects across the entire county. The decision authority regarding projects rests with the body designated to make such decisions under the Idaho Code. If the proposed project is within the county, then the Board of County Commissioners is the deciding entity, except for those projects within the area controlled by a city council, fire district, or separate road district commissioners. Recommendations made by ad hoc groups with expertise in the subject in question are generally carefully considered; however, the final decision must be made by the entity authorized by the Idaho Code.

It is not necessary to rank projects numerically, although that is one approach, rather it may be possible to rank them categorically (high priority set, medium priority set, and so forth) and still accomplish the goals and objectives set forth in this planning document.

The following was prepared by the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), June 27, 2003, and is included here as a reference for the identification of prioritizing treatments between communities.

**Purpose:** To provide national, uniform guidance for implementing the provisions of the “Collaborative Fuels Treatment” MOU, and to satisfy the requirements of Task e, Goal 4 of the Implementation Plan for the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy.

**Intent:** The intent is to establish broad, nationally compatible standards for identifying and prioritizing communities at risk, while allowing for maximum flexibility at the state and regional level. Three basic premises are:

- Include all lands and all ownerships.
- Use a collaborative process that is consistent with the complexity of land ownership patterns, resource management issues, and the number of interested stakeholders.
- Set priorities by evaluating projects, not by ranking communities.

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) set forth the following guidelines in the Final Draft Concept Paper; Communities at Risk, December 2, 2002.

**Task:** Develop a definition for “communities at risk” and a process for prioritizing them, per the Implementation Plan for the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (Goal 4.e.). In addition, this definition will form the foundation for the NASF commitment to annually identify priority fuels reduction and ecosystem restoration projects in the proposed MOU with the federal agencies (section C.2 (b)).

#### 1.1.2.3.2 Conceptual Approach

1. NASF fully supports the definition of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) previously published in the Federal Register. Further, proximity to federal lands should not be a consideration. The WUI is a set of conditions that exists on, or near, areas of wildland fuels nation-wide, regardless of land ownership.
2. Communities at risk (or, alternately, landscapes of similar risk) should be identified on a state-by-state basis with the involvement of all agencies with wildland fire protection responsibilities: state, local, tribal, and federal.
3. It is neither reasonable nor feasible to attempt to prioritize communities on a rank order basis. Rather, communities (or landscapes) should be sorted into three, broad categories or zones of risk: high, medium, and low. Each state, in collaboration with its local partners, will develop the specific criteria it will use to sort communities or landscapes into the three categories. NASF recommends using the publication "Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Hazard Assessment Methodology" developed by the National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Program (circa 1998) as a reference guide. (This program, which has since evolved into the Firewise Program, is under the oversight of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)). At minimum, states should consider the following factors when assessing the relative degree of exposure each community (landscape) faces.
  - **Risk:** Using historic fire occurrence records and other factors, assess the anticipated probability of a wildfire ignition.
  - **Hazard:** Assess the fuel conditions surrounding the community using a methodology such as fire condition class, or [other] process.
  - **Values Protected:** Evaluate the human values associated with the community or landscape, such as homes, businesses, and community infrastructure (e.g. water systems, utilities, transportation systems, critical care facilities, schools, manufacturing and industrial sites, and high value commercial timber lands or rangelands).
  - **Protection Capabilities:** Assess the wildland fire protection capabilities of the agencies and local fire departments with jurisdiction.
4. Prioritize by project not by community. Annually prioritize projects within each state using the collaborative process defined in the national, interagency MOU "For the Development of a Collaborative Fuels Treatment Program". Assign the highest priorities to projects that will provide the greatest benefits either on the landscape or to communities. Attempt to properly sequence treatments on the landscape by working first around and within communities, and then moving further out into the surrounding landscape. This will require:
  - First, focus on the zone of highest overall risk but consider projects in all zones. Identify a set of projects that will effectively reduce the level of risk to communities within the zone.
  - Second, determining the community's willingness and readiness to actively participate in an identified project.
  - Third, determining the willingness and ability of the owner of the surrounding land to undertake, and maintain, a complementary project.

- Last, set priorities by looking for projects that best meet the three criteria above. It is important to note that projects with the greatest potential to reduce risk to communities and the landscape may not be those in the highest risk zone, particularly if either the community or the surrounding landowner is not willing or able to actively participate.
5. It is important, and necessary, that we be able to demonstrate a level of accomplishment that justifies to Congress the value of continuing the current level of appropriations for the National Fire Plan. Although appealing to appropriators and others, it is not likely that many communities (if any) will ever be removed from the list of communities at risk. Even after treatment, all communities will remain at some, albeit reduced, level of risk. However, by using a science-based system for measuring relative risk, we can likely show that, after treatment (or a series of treatments), communities are at “*reduced risk*”.

Similarly, scattered, individual homes that complete projects to create defensible space could be “counted” as “households at reduced risk”. This would be a way to report progress in reducing risk to scattered homes in areas of low priority for large-scale fuels treatment projects.

Using the concept described above, the NASF believes it is possible to accurately assess the relative risk that communities face from wildland fire. Recognizing that the condition of the vegetation (fuel) on the landscape is dynamic, assessments and re-assessments must be done on a state-by-state basis, using a process that allows for the integration of local knowledge, conditions, and circumstances, with science-based national guidelines. We must remember that it is not only important to lower the risk to communities, but once the risk has been reduced, to maintain those communities at a reduced risk.

Further, it is essential that both the assessment process and the prioritization of projects be done collaboratively, with all local agencies with fire protection jurisdiction – federal, state, local, and tribal – taking an active role.

#### **1.1.2.4 Healthy Forests Restoration Act**

On December 3, 2003, President Bush signed into law the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 to reduce the threat of destructive wildfires while upholding environmental standards and encouraging early public input during review and planning processes. The legislation is based on sound science and helps further the President's Healthy Forests Initiative pledge to care for America's forests and rangelands, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire to communities, help save the lives of firefighters and citizens, and protect threatened and endangered species.

Among other things the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA):

- Strengthens public participation in developing high priority projects;
- Reduces the complexity of environmental analysis allowing federal land agencies to use the best science available to actively manage land under their protection;
- Creates a pre-decisional objections process encouraging early public participation in project planning; and
- Issues clear guidance for court action challenging HFRA projects.

The Owyhee County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan is developed to adhere to the principles of the HFRA while providing recommendations consistent with the policy document which should assist the federal land management agencies (Bureau of Land Management, US Bureau of Reclamation, and US Fish and Wildlife Service) with implementing



wildfire mitigation projects in Owyhee County that incorporate public involvement and the input from a wide spectrum of fire and emergency services providers in the region.

### **1.1.3 Local Guidelines and Integration with Other Efforts**

#### **1.1.3.1 Sage Grouse Management Plan**

Adopted in June 2000 and amended and updated in August 2004, the Owyhee County Sage Grouse Management Plan was developed by a local working group with extensive knowledge of the local area and the localized threats to the species. The plan was developed to serve as a long-term collaborative management plan to utilize local input and knowledge to develop a long-term collaborative management plan which would provide the framework for sage grouse management in conjunction with federal, state and Owyhee County land management plans and actions. This plan provides guidance to resource and land management agencies as well as to Owyhee County on dealing with issues that directly or indirectly affects the Local Working Group's goal of conserving and properly managing Sage Grouse within Owyhee County. While the initial version proposed a number of action items, its primary emphasis was to acquire sound scientific data on sage grouse and sage grouse habitat in Owyhee County. Through the August 2004 amendment and update, the local working group modified the plan to ensure it was PECE (Policy for Evaluating Conservation Efforts) compliant as the PECE conditions had not been in existence at the time of development of the original plan. The update was also used to ensure that the emphasis of the plan's action projects was appropriately balanced between conservation projects and the continuation of needed research into sage grouse populations and habitat.

Fire is the greatest single factor responsible for the loss of Sage Grouse habitat in southeastern Owyhee County. Many of the fires occurred in the more arid Wyoming big-sagebrush habitat type, covered large areas and were often followed by increases in annual grasses, especially cheatgrass. There is very limited opportunity to restore these areas to their former state and they essentially represent a stable state that will not change without substantial human intervention. The increase in fine fuel in the form of cheatgrass has made these habitats more prone to fire and increased fire frequencies that result in loss of shrubs, especially sagebrush. Sagebrush seed is wind-dispersed and 95% is deposited within 30 feet of the parent plant, which largely precludes natural reseeding of large complete burns.

At the same time, areas that have not had wildfire recurrence for 15 to 20 years typically show substantial sagebrush recruitment, especially at the higher elevation range for Wyoming big-sagebrush and natural Mountain big-sagebrush communities. In addition, Mountain big-sagebrush typically re-established rather rapidly and such habitats may be fully occupied by big-sagebrush in 20 to 30 years.

Action plan activities identified in the Sage Grouse Management plan include:

1. **Grazing Management.** Sage grouse habitat condition will be assessed through quantitative assessments conducted in accordance with the SAGE GROUSE HABITAT INVENTORY ACTION PLAN on state and private land.
2. **Develop maps that identify sage grouse habitat for high priority protection from wildfire.** Using current information, provide maps to the fire management staff of all groups that fight fires in Owyhee County outlining critical sage grouse habitat in the county. Initial maps will be developed for the 2000 fire season and updated annually thereafter. (Lead: BLM). (Initial maps completed in 2001 and updates are ongoing).

3. **Fire Rehabilitation.** The sites of all future wildfires in high priority sage grouse habitat identified in Section C will, regardless of potential for natural recovery, be reseeded with sagebrush and, when needed, grasses and forbs best adapted to the site to hasten recovery of the habitat. This policy should be instituted immediately. (Lead: Appropriate land management agency or private landowner). (The action has been carried out since 2000 and is ongoing).
4. **Sagebrush Restoration.** Implement sagebrush restoration projects in historic sage grouse habitat where historic fires have removed sagebrush cover. A minimum of 1,000 acres of combined federal, state, and private lands shall be targeted for restoration annually with seed mixtures that are best for sage grouse and adapted to the site. (Lead: Appropriate land management agency or private landowner) (One project has been proposed and is being pursued but none completed).
5. **Juniper Encroachment.** Using the maps created by the Habitat Inventory Action Plan, identify existing and potential loss of sage grouse habitat due to juniper encroachment. The areas of greatest benefit to sage grouse will be prioritized so that juniper control activities can be scheduled. Suitable methods of juniper eradication such as prescribed burning, chemical control, woodland harvest, chaining, and other mechanical means should be evaluated and employed where appropriate. Treat and eradicate juniper on a minimum of 500 acres of state land (IDL Plan) and 12,000 acres of federal land (Owyhee RMP) annually to enhance sage grouse habitat by restoring healthy sagebrush-grassland communities. (Lead: Appropriate land management agency/authority). (Two projects have been completed and planning is in progress throughout the Juniper encroachment zone)

The Owyhee County Sage Grouse Management Plan has been adopted by the Sage Grouse Local Work Group and represents the guiding policy for the County in relationship to the management of Sage Grouse and impacted land management activities. This Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan adopts, and will adhere to, the policies and intentions of the Sage Grouse Management Plan during its implementation to insure the listed goals and action plans are consistent and targeted at uniform implementation.

#### **1.1.3.2 Owyhee County Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan**

The Owyhee County Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan (February 11, 2002) is a guide that establishes goals and objectives to help the County grow and develop. The Owyhee County Comprehensive Plan includes a forecast of conditions that are anticipated to occur within the next twenty-five-year period, 2000 to 2025. The Plan addresses and includes all 14 comprehensive planning components of the "Idaho Local Planning Act of 1975" as supplemented and amended.

Planning is an ongoing process. Conditions and priorities change; consequently the plan will be reviewed regularly and revised when necessary. The 14 planning components included in the Owyhee County Comprehensive Growth and Development Plan include:

1. Population
2. Private Property Rights
3. School Facilities and Transportation
4. Economic Development
5. Land Use
6. Transportation
7. Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities
8. Housing

9. Recreation and Tourism
10. Natural Resources
11. Hazardous Areas
12. Special Areas or Sites
13. Community Design
14. Implementation

Within each chapter of the comprehensive plan are goals and objectives, which help establish development guidelines and public policy. Goals are defined as statements, which indicate a general aim or purpose to be achieved. Goals reflect countywide values. Objectives are defined as guidelines, which establish a definite course to guide present and future decisions. The Owyhee County Comprehensive Plan is directed toward all land within the county including federal, state, public and private lands.

This Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan will “dove-tail” with the County’s Comprehensive Plan during its development and implementation to insure that the goals and objectives of each are integrated together. In many sections of this document, direct reference will be made to specific recommendations of the county plan that are amplified or enhanced in this document.

#### **1.1.3.3 Owyhee County Code and Zoning Ordinance**

The lands within Owyhee County which produce the natural resources vital to the local economy are either managed by federal or state agencies or are critically affected by lands managed by such agencies. All private property and county or municipally owned property lying within the County is effected by federal and/or state management practices. Such practices have the potential to, and often do, adversely impact the continuation of the culture, custom and economic stability of the County. By resolution, the Owyhee County Board of Commissioners has previously established a land use planning committee which has served as an advisory committee to the Board regarding planning for and implementation of plans for the federally and state managed lands lying within Owyhee County. That committee has assisted the Board with the development of a land use plan for the federally and state managed lands, and it has become clear that the planning process for such lands must be a long-term undertaking if the custom, culture and economic stability of Owyhee County is to be preserved. The purpose of the Zoning Ordinance is to provide for the land use committee as a standing advisory committee to continue advising the Board regarding the management of the federally and state managed lands lying within Owyhee County and the relationship of that management to continuation of the custom, culture and economic stability of the County.

This Ordinance is authorized by Article 12, Section 2 of the Idaho Constitution, Idaho Code Section §31-714, 31-828, 31-4408, and 31-4504 and is mandated by Idaho Code Section §67-6511 which provides that each board of county commissioners “shall” establish a land use district or districts within the unincorporated area of the county. This zoning ordinance is designed to, and enacted to, protect the public health, safety and welfare by implementing the Owyhee County Comprehensive Plan, and accomplish the following purposes:

- Protect and conserve the historic customs, traditions and way of life unique to Owyhee County, consistent with a reasonable and orderly rate of growth and development and protection of private property rights;
- Protect and conserve the agricultural and range uses which form the primary base of the County’s economy;

- Provide for reasonable and sound land development, a safe and healthy environment, and a successful economic climate;
- Require the coordination by the Planning and Zoning Commission with the Owyhee County Natural Resources Committee to achieve coordinated planning for the entire County and protection of private property rights which are critical to economic stability of the County and to the maintenance of a healthy environment;
- Protect and enhance private property rights and property values consistent with the County's responsibility to protect public health, safety and welfare;
- Minimize infiltration into agricultural land areas of those elements of urban development which will adversely impact agricultural operations;
- Provide a process for negotiating and developing Areas of City Impact.
- Designate land use districts (zoning districts) appropriate for uses that meet the needs of the County's citizens by providing for growth compatible with protection of soil, water, air, wildlife and other natural environmental and scientific qualities;
- Preserve the recreational, archeological, architectural and cultural history of the County and its historic resources;
- Protect and conserve the natural resources in the County by considering the impact on such resources of proposed land uses;
- Maintain, protect, and enhance the County's transportation system;
- Provide a means for administering the land use planning process in a manner which can assist school districts to maintain, protect and enhance school facilities and school transportation systems;
- Provide a means for administering the land use planning process in a manner that can assist providing public services at reasonable cost and avoid adverse impact of land use growth on the County's taxpayers;
- Provide an administrative process to effectively implement the Comprehensive Plan and this implementing ordinance.

#### **1.1.3.4 Owyhee County Land Use and Management Plan for Federal and State Managed Lands**

This Plan provides a positive guide for the Land Use Committee and the Board to coordinate their efforts with federal and state land management agencies in the development and implementation of land use plans and management actions which are compatible with the best interests of Owyhee County and its citizens. The Plan is designed to facilitate continued and revitalized multiple use of federally and state managed lands in the County.

The Land Use Committee, the Board, and the citizens of Owyhee County recognize that federal law mandates multiple use of federally managed lands and they positively support multiple use. Maintenance of such multiple use necessarily includes continued maintenance of the historic and traditional economic uses which have been made of federally managed and state managed lands in the County. It is therefore the policy of Owyhee County that the Land Use Committee and the Board work constantly to assure that federal and state agencies shall inform the Board of all pending or proposed actions affecting local communities and citizens and coordinate with the Board in the planning and implementation of those actions.

Owyhee County has previously developed its Comprehensive Plan related to privately owned lands in the County. This Land Use Plan is now directed toward management of federally and state managed lands. With adoption of this Plan the County puts in place a "Comprehensive Plan" which includes "all land within the jurisdiction of the governing Board" as directed by the legislature. Idaho Code § 67-6528 provides that "the state of Idaho, and all its agencies, Boards, departments, institutions, and local special purpose districts, shall comply with all plans and ordinances adopted under the Local Planning Act." These statements of purpose, of duty to plan, and duties of state agencies to comply with plans adopted under the Local Planning Act certainly contemplate coordination by state agencies of their planning efforts with the local planning efforts of Owyhee County.

Through the land use planning process Owyhee County commits itself to attempting to assure that all natural resource decisions affecting the County shall be guided by the principles of maintaining and revitalizing multiple use of federally managed and state managed lands, protection of private property rights and private property interests including investment backed expectations, protection of local historical custom and culture, protection of the traditional economic structures in the County which form the base for economic stability for the County, the opening of new economic opportunities through reliance on free markets, and protection of the right of the enjoyment of the natural resources of the County by all citizens of the County and those communities utilizing those natural resources within the County. Owyhee County is convinced that resource and land use management decisions made in a coordinated manner by federal management agencies, state management agencies and county officials will not only firmly maintain and revitalize multiple use of federally and state managed lands in Owyhee County but will enhance environmental quality throughout the County.

#### **1.1.3.5 Owyhee Resource Management Plan**

The Owyhee Resource Management Plan (RMP) was prepared to provide the Bureau of Land Management, Lower Snake River District with a comprehensive framework for managing public lands administered by the Owyhee Resource Area. The purpose of the RMP is to ensure public land use is planned for and managed on the basis of multiple-use and sustained yield in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

The Owyhee Resource Area encompasses 1,779,492 acres. This total includes the following:

- 1,320,032 acres administered by BLM, Idaho
- 136,936 acres administered by the State of Idaho
- 319,777 acres of private lands
- 2,747 acres of water, primarily the Snake River

The area is bounded on the west by Oregon, on the south by Nevada, on the north by the Snake River and on the east by Castle Creek, Deep Creek, the Owyhee River, and the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. Most of the public lands are contiguous with only a few scattered or isolated parcels.

The resource area contains the northern extent of the Owyhee Mountain Range and lies within what is often referred to as the Columbia Plateau. The Columbia Plateau is an elevated plateau with mountains which are separated by canyons draining to the Pacific Ocean via the Snake and Columbia Rivers. This broad regional landform and vegetative classification is known as the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem.

The Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem is widespread over much of southern Idaho, eastern Oregon and Washington, and portions of northern Nevada, California, and Utah. This ecosystem contains a large diversity in landform and vegetation types ranging from vast expanses of flat

sagebrush covered plateaus to rugged mountains blanketed with juniper woodlands and grasslands.

BLM has three primary levels of land use planning decisions; the RMP level, the activity level and the site specific level. This RMP focuses mostly on broad resource objectives and direction. However, it also provides some activity level guidance and includes some site specific decisions. Several existing activity level plans are referenced in this RMP. They will be updated or modified, as necessary, to include current information and be in conformance with the RMP. These plans include, but are not limited to, the Owyhee Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan, the Wild Horse Herd Management Plan, the Lower Snake River District Fire Management Plan, the Owyhee Juniper Woodland Harvest Management Plan, the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Management Plan, the Owyhee River Recreation Management Plan and several livestock grazing allotment management plans. Subsequent activity level and site specific level planning processes will include appropriate public participation opportunities and NEPA compliance.

#### **1.1.3.6 Owyhee County Fire Mitigation Planning Effort and Philosophy**

The goals of this planning process include the integration of the National Fire Plan, the Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, and the requirements of FEMA for a county-wide Fire Mitigation Plan; a component of the County's All Hazards Mitigation Plan. This effort will utilize the best and most appropriate science from all partners, the integration of local and regional knowledge about wildfire risks and fire behavior, while meeting the needs of local citizens, the regional economy, the significance of this region to the rest of Idaho and the Inland West.

##### **1.1.3.6.1 Mission Statement**

To make Owyhee County residents, communities, state agencies, local governments, and businesses less vulnerable to the negative effects of wildland fires through the effective administration of wildfire hazard mitigation grant programs, hazard risk assessments, wise and efficient fuels treatments, and a coordinated approach to mitigation policy through federal, state, regional, and local planning efforts. Our combined prioritization will be the protection of people, structures, infrastructure, and unique ecosystems that contribute to our way of life and the sustainability of the local and regional economy.

##### **1.1.3.6.2 Vision Statement**

Institutionalize and promote a countywide wildfire hazard mitigation ethic through leadership, professionalism, and excellence, leading the way to a safe, sustainable Owyhee County.

##### **1.1.3.6.3 Goals**

- To reduce the area of WUI land burned and losses experienced because of wildfires where these fires threaten communities in the wildland-urban interface
- Prioritize the protection of people, structures, infrastructure, and unique ecosystems that contribute to our way of life and the sustainability of the local and regional economy
- Educate communities about the unique challenges of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface (WUI)
- Establish mitigation priorities and develop mitigation strategies in Owyhee County

- Strategically locate and plan fuel reduction projects
- Provide recommendations for alternative treatment methods, such as modifying forest stand density, herbicide treatments, fuel reduction techniques, and disposal or removal of treated slash
- Meet or exceed the requirements of the National Fire Plan and FEMA for a County level Fire Mitigation Plan